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ern China and north to southern Amoor Land; it occurs also on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Japan has a peculiar species, but the greatest differentiation is found on the Sunda Islands, Celebes and especially the Moluccas, and the numerous small islands and groups of islands known as the Papuan Islands. From New Guinea *Zosterops* ranges over to Australia, Tasmania, New Zealand and the Chatham Islands. Peculiar species are found on Lord Howe's (2) and Norfolk Islands (2); New Caledonia, the Loyalty Islands (3); New Hebrides (2); Fiji Islands (3); Carolines (3); Mackenzie Group (2); Pelew Islands; Ladrone; Solomon Islands: Rendove; Louisiade Islands; New Britain.

The extensive distribution of *Zosterops* and the very great differentiation into many species on islands which are often close together, or separated by very great distances from each other, can only be explained by postulating the existence of a former continent.

*(To be continued.)*

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#### EDITOR'S TABLE.

THE meeting of the British Association, held in Toronto in August, was a success in every respect. The attendance (some 1300) was large, the addresses were good and many of the papers read were important, while the city of Toronto outdid itself in entertaining its guests. The way in which the spirit of the Victorian Jubilee was manifested was noticeable, and the guests could not but realize that they were attending the meeting of a British Association. We do not mean to infer by this that the guests were made uncomfortable, but that the national feeling could not help showing itself, in spite of such utterances as those of Sir John Evans in his Presidential Address, when he said:

"Our gathering this year presents a feature of entire novelty and extreme interest, inasmuch as the sister association of the United States of America—still mourning the loss of her illustrious President, Professor Cope—and some other learned societies have made special arrangements to allow of their members coming here to join us. I need hardly say how welcome their presence is, nor how gladly we look forward to their taking part in our discussions and aiding us in an inter-

change of thought. To such a meeting the term 'international' seems almost misapplied. It may rather be described as a family gathering, in which our relatives, more or less distant in blood, but still intimately connected with us in language, literature and habit of thought, have spontaneously arranged to take part."

Our space will not allow us to print a list of the papers presented nor to reproduce in full the various valuable addresses given. Any summary or abstract would do injustice to some of the most scholarly summaries of progress which we have ever known. As these are presented in full in both *Science* and *Nature*, the limitations of our pages are the less to be regretted. We may, however, indulge in a few notes upon matters suggested by the meetings and by the addresses given.

Naturally the contrasting features of the two associations come first to mind. In some respects our association seems the better, in others we have something to learn from our transatlantic cousins; while in still other features the two organizations are essentially identical. Thus both are subdivided into sections (the sections, however, not having the same limits in the two). These sections listen to papers and to Presidential Addresses, and the association, as a whole, is offered numerous entertainments, junkets, and the like, by its hosts.

It is not necessary to detail the points in which we think our own association is the better, but we may be pardoned if we point out some features in which we think the British Association superior to our own.

In the first place the Presidential Addresses delivered before the British Association strike us as, on the whole, better than those with which our audiences are greeted. While now and then an American address will rise to as high a standard as anything that Great Britain can boast, theirs are on the average the more thoughtful and scholarly, while ours too often have a prefatory air and lack in breath of view.

In personnel of those who attend, the British Association again has the advantage. In England it is the fashion to attend these annual meetings, and no one there has reached such a pinnacle of greatness that he can afford to ignore or neglect this national society. As a result, at their gatherings one can be reasonably certain of meeting most of those who are the leaders in English scientific thought. In America, on the other hand, the tendency is in the other direction. It would be an easy matter to give a considerable list of names of those prominent in American science, whose faces are never seen at the association meetings.

In England many of the local scientific societies are affiliated with the British Association and send their delegates regularly to the meetings. This year, as in years past, there was a conference of these delegates, and Professor Miall, of Leeds, made some remarks before them, which seem to us so suggestive and so valuable that we must make them the text for a short digression from our main subject.

One who is at all familiar with the material which is constantly submitted for publication in our scientific journals soon realizes that there is an immense amount of wasted, or misdirected energy among the scientifically inclined. Naturally these persons attack the most prominent questions—questions far beyond their capacities, or at least beyond their facilities for doing good work. As we once heard it expressed, only the editor of a scientific periodical can realize how many second class men write upon first class problems. Now there is work, good and valuable work, which these willing individuals can do. In most cases they are removed from library facilities and large collections; not unfrequently they are ignorant of all languages except their mother tongue. They are good observers, have good reasoning powers, but are the victims of their environment. It was to such provincial naturalists that Professor Miall spoke, and he advised them to turn their attention to the study of the life-histories of the common forms about them, and to his every word we say a hearty “amen.” We know too little about our intimate neighbors; we are too apt to think that some form from the interior of Africa or from some remote island of the South Seas is far more interesting, far more important, than those objects which we see every day. Yet these forms often possess extreme interest. We have only to think how glad our European fellow workers are to get our *ganoids* and our *Limulus*, to realize that we have important animals and plants in our own country. This study of the life-histories needs no library, no collections, no acquaintance with foreign tongues. It needs only a pair of sharp eyes to turn out work which shall be as full of interest and as valuable as the classic paper of Smeathman upon the white ants. That our most familiar forms will reveal new and unsuspected points of interest, is evidenced by Dr. H. H. Wilder’s recent discovery that, contrary to all our text books, several of our salamanders are lungless. One cannot read the pages of the late W. H. Gibson, without realizing that there is much to be found out about the animals and plants about our very doors; and every new fact about the commonest form is a positive contribution to knowledge.

But *revenons à nos moutons*. Is it not possible for some of our smaller local societies to become affiliated with the American Association in such a way as to be productive of mutual assistance? Cannot the association act as a medium of intercourse and of exchange of ideas? Cannot the members of these societies have conferences similar to those which take place in England? We are aware that what have been termed "affiliated societies" meet with the American Association, but these societies are not the ones to which we refer. We are also aware that the Society of Naturalists started out with a somewhat similar idea. It was dropped by that organization, not because there was no need of it, but for other reasons.

Again, the British Association annually appropriates large sums (this year \$7,750) in aid of various scientific investigations. Our association has recently entered upon a similar course, but so far its appropriations have been small. To the statement that it appropriates all that it can, there is a ready reply. Look at the annual report of the expenditures of the association and you will find chances for economy. Read through one volume of the "Proceedings" and you will conclude that that portly annual volume could be reduced in size without the slightest loss to science. The money saved by this could be very advantageously used in other ways, and it would not be insignificant in amount.

Where all the addresses were so good it seems somewhat invidious to select one as especially noteworthy, but the review of thirteen years progress in physiology by Professor Michael Foster, seems to the non-physiological writer as, perhaps, the most striking and suggestive. We call it up however, not for the purpose of making any comparisons, but for the purpose of quoting from it one portion which seems especially timely after the recent attempts to get Congress and the Legislatures of Massachusetts and other States to pass anti-vivisection laws. When one knows the misstatements and perversions—to use no harsher term—of the advocates of these bills, it is a pleasure to be able to quote a direct reply to one of their deliberate misrepresentations. In his concluding remarks Professor Foster said:

"And I will be here so bold as to dare to point out that this development of his science must, in the times to come, influence the attitude of the physiologist towards the world, and ought to influence the attitude of the world towards him. I imagine that if a plebiscite, limited even to instructed, I might almost say scientific men, were taken at the present moment, it would be found that the most prevalent conception of physiology is that it is a something which is in some way an appen-

dage to the art of medicine. That physiology is, and always must be, the basis of the science of healing is so much a truism that I would not venture to repeat it here were it not that some of those enemies, alike to science and humanity, who are at times called anti-vivisectionists, and whose zeal often outruns, not only discretion, but even truth, have quite recently asserted that I think otherwise. Should such a hallucination ever threaten to possess me, I should only have to turn to the little we yet know of the physiology of the nervous system and remind myself how great a help the results of pure physiological curiosity—I repeat the words, pure physiological curiosity, for curiosity is the mother of science—have been, alike to the surgeon and the physician, in the treatment of those in some way most afflicting maladies, the diseases of the nervous system. Now physiology is, and always must be, the basis of the science of healing; but it is something more. When physiology is dealing with those parts of the body which we call muscular, vascular, glandular tissues and the like, rightly handled she points out the way not only to amend that which is hurt, to repair the damages of bad usage and disease, but so to train the growing tissues and to guide the grown ones as that the best may be made of them for the purposes of life. She not only heals, she governs and educates. Nor does she do otherwise when she comes to deal with the nervous tissues. Nay it is the very prerogative of these nervous tissues that their life is above that of all the other tissues, contingent on the environment and susceptible of education. If increasing knowledge gives us increasing power so to mould a muscular fibre that it shall play to the best the part which it has to play in life, the little knowledge we at present possess gives us at least as much confidence in a coming far greater power over the nerve cell. This is not the place to plunge into the deep waters of the relation which the body bears to the mind, but this at least stares us in the face, that changes in what we call the body bring about changes in what we call the mind. When we alter the one, we alter the other. If, as the whole past history of our science leads us to expect, in the coming years a clearer and clearer insight into the nature and conditions of that molecular dance which is to us the material token of nervous action, and a fuller, exacter knowledge of the laws which govern the sweep of nervous impulses along fibre and cell, give us wider and directer command over the moulding of the growing nervous mechanism and the maintenance and regulation of the grown one, then assuredly physiology will take its place as a judge of appeal in questions not only of the body, but of the mind; it will raise its voice not in the hospital and consulting-room only, but also in the Senate and the school."

WE have received notice of the recent formation at New Orleans of "The Louisiana Society of Naturalists" with Prof. J. H. Dillard, of Tulane University, as President, and Mr. E. Foster, Secretary. The Society has already about 45 members, nearly all of whom are workers in some branch of natural science. It proposes to work up the fauna and flora of the State in a systematic manner, a task never before attempted. One has only to look at the map of Louisiana—possessing the mouth of one of the largest rivers in the world, numerous bayous, vast salt and freshwater lakes, large islands and bars, extensive swamps and forests—to see what grand possibilities are in store for this society if its members will study geographical distribution in the broad and yet detailed way in which it is done by the Biological Survey of the Department of Agriculture. We hope to receive reports from time to time of the results achieved by the society.

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## General Notes.

### BOTANY.

**Pfaff's Observations on the Nature of Ivy Poisoning.**—Considering the frequency of *Rhus* poisoning and the abundance of our two noxious species, it is remarkable that the exact nature of the irritant has so long eluded discovery. The most widely divergent views upon the subject have from time to time been advanced. Khittel, in 1858, regarded the poisonous principle a volatile alkaloid; Maisch, in 1865, believed it a volatile acid; while Burrill at one time thought a bacterial germ might be the responsible agent. However, none of these observers has made a very satisfactory case, and it is accordingly a matter of more than ordinary interest that the poisonous principle has at length been isolated by Dr. Franz Pfaff, of the Harvard Medical School. As Dr. Pfaff's preliminary article<sup>1</sup> upon the subject is published in a medical journal and may, therefore, escape the notice of biologists who are not also physicians, his results may be summarized in these columns.

After a résumé of the investigations on *Rhus* poisoning, the fact is pointed out that skin irritants are, in general, rapid or slow in their

<sup>1</sup>Journal of Experimental Medicine, II, 181-195, t. 10.